

The Quality of the Leader–Employee Relationship as a Lever for Human Resource Motivation: A Case Study of Workers in Private Companies in the Boeny Region

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Abstract—This study examines the quality of leader–employee relationships as a lever for human resource motivation among workers in private companies in the Boeny Region, Madagascar. The objective was to analyze the main dimensions of leader–employee relationships and their influence on workers' motivation. A survey was conducted among 200 workers using a structured questionnaire. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple linear regression. The findings show that communication, trust, listening, support, recognition, and mutual respect are the main dimensions characterizing leader–employee relationships, with an overall mean of 3.96 out of 5. The results highlight the importance of interpersonal relationships in supporting workers' motivation and involvement.

Keywords— Leader–employee, relationship; human, resource, motivation; leadership.

I. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary companies, the performance of activities depends partly on the ability of organizations to sustainably mobilize their human resources. Beyond remuneration and material working conditions, employees pay particular attention to the way they are treated, supported, and recognized within their professional environment [1]. Work motivation can therefore be influenced by the possibility of satisfying different needs, developing skills, obtaining recognition, and finding meaning in one's work. In this context, management practices play a particular role, as managers interact with their employees on a daily basis [2]. The quality of exchanges, communication, listening, and recognition can contribute to creating an environment conducive to employee involvement, while unsatisfactory professional relationships may alter their perception of work and their willingness to become actively involved [3].

The relationship between a leader and an employee is therefore not limited to a simple hierarchical relationship based on the transmission of instructions and the supervision of tasks. It also constitutes a space for interaction in which trust, respect, support, and recognition are progressively built. Each daily interaction can contribute to the perception that a worker develops toward their manager and organization. A leader who communicates clearly, listens to concerns, provides a certain degree of autonomy, recognizes efforts, and supports employees can contribute to establishing a favorable professional relationship [4]. Conversely, a significant relational distance, insufficient communication, or limited recognition may reduce the quality of interactions between the two parties. This relational dimension of leadership is notably

grounded in the Leader-Member Exchange approach, according to which the quality of relationships developed between managers and employees constitutes an important dimension of the leadership process [5]. In private companies in the Boeny Region, where employees participate daily in the achievement of organizational activities and objectives, studying these relationships appears particularly relevant for understanding the factors associated with their motivation.

Differences in perceptions among workers may notably concern the trust placed in them by their manager, the quality of communication, recognition of work accomplished, the support received, or participation in decisions related to professional activities. These elements make it possible to consider motivation not only as an individual characteristic, but also as a phenomenon that can develop through daily interactions within the company [6].

This study focuses on the quality of the leader–employee relationship as a lever for human resource motivation in private companies in the Boeny Region. It seeks to address the following research problem: To what extent does the quality of the relationship between leaders and employees influence workers' motivation in private companies in the Boeny Region? Two research questions are considered: What are the main characteristics of the relationship between leaders and employees? and To what extent does this relationship influence workers' motivation? Two hypotheses are therefore formulated: The leader–employee relationship is mainly characterized by communication, trust, listening, support, recognition, and mutual respect; and the quality of this relationship has a positive and significant influence on workers' motivation. The general objective is to analyze the quality of the leader–employee relationship and its influence

on human resource motivation in private companies in the Boeny Region, Madagascar. The study first presents the literature review, followed by the methodology, results, discussion, and recommendations, before concluding with the main findings.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

A. Research Approach and Design

From a methodological perspective, this study adopts a descriptive and analytical approach. The descriptive approach makes it possible to identify the main characteristics of the relationship between leaders and employees in private companies in the Boeny Region and to assess how these characteristics are perceived by workers. The study focuses particularly on communication, trust, listening, support, recognition, and mutual respect. This approach makes it possible to describe the quality of the leader–employee relationship based on the respondents' perceptions. The analytical approach is then used to examine the influence of this relationship on human resource motivation, using statistical methods appropriate to the hypotheses formulated.

B. Survey Method and Sampling

The survey method constituted the main method used for data collection. A field survey was conducted among a sample of 200 workers from private companies in the Boeny Region. Data were collected from several companies in order to take into account the diversity of business sectors and organizational contexts present in the region. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to workers in the companies under study. The questionnaire included several dimensions for assessing the quality of the relationship between leaders and employees, particularly communication, trust, listening, support, recognition, and mutual respect. It also included questions relating to workers' motivation. Responses were measured using a Likert scale, allowing respondents to express their degree of agreement with the various statements provided.

The diversity of the companies surveyed made it possible to include several business sectors, notably trade, services, production, administration, and other private-sector activities present in the Boeny Region. This diversity makes it possible to consider different organizational profiles and obtain a broader assessment of the relationship between leaders and workers, as well as their level of motivation.

C. Data Processing and Analysis

The data collected were checked, coded, and entered into Microsoft Excel. Data processing made it possible to calculate frequencies, percentages, means, and other statistical indicators required for the analysis. The data were then organized according to the different variables selected for the two research hypotheses. Descriptive analysis was used to determine workers' levels of perception regarding the different dimensions of the leader–employee relationship and their level of motivation. Explanatory analysis was based on multiple linear regression, making it possible to examine the influence of the different dimensions of the quality of the leader–

employee relationship on workers' motivation in the private companies under study.

D. Model for Testing the First Hypothesis

The first research hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H1: The relationship between leaders and employees in private companies in the Boeny Region is mainly characterized by communication, trust, listening, support, recognition, and mutual respect.

To test this hypothesis, six main dimensions were selected: communication, trust, listening, support, recognition, and mutual respect. A comparative analysis of the scores obtained for these different dimensions makes it possible to identify the aspects that most characterize the relationship between the leaders and employees surveyed. To strengthen the statistical analysis, a first regression model can be used to examine the dimensions associated with the overall quality of the leader–employee relationship:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \beta_6 X_6 + \varepsilon$$

Where:

Y = Overall level of the quality of the leader–employee relationship;

β_0 = Model constant;

X_1 = Communication;

X_2 = Trust;

X_3 = Listening;

X_4 = Support;

X_5 = Recognition;

X_6 = Mutual respect;

$\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4, \beta_5$, and β_6 = Regression coefficients associated with the explanatory variables;

ε = Error term.

This first model makes it possible to examine the relative contribution of the six selected dimensions to the characterization of the quality of the leader–employee relationship. The regression coefficients make it possible to assess the contribution of each dimension to the overall level of this relationship. Hypothesis H1 is considered supported when the dimensions studied receive high levels of appreciation and constitute the main characteristics of the leader–employee relationship observed among the workers surveyed.

E. Model for Testing the Second Hypothesis

The second hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H2: The quality of the leader–employee relationship has a positive and significant influence on workers' motivation in private companies in the Boeny Region. To test this hypothesis, workers' motivation is considered the dependent variable. The six dimensions of the quality of the leader–employee relationship identified in the first hypothesis are considered the independent variables. The second multiple linear regression model is formulated as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \beta_6 X_6 + \varepsilon$$

Where:

Y = Level of workers' motivation;

β_0 = Model constant;

X_1 = Communication;

X_2 = Trust;
 X_3 = Listening;
 X_4 = Support;
 X_5 = Recognition;
 X_6 = Mutual respect;

$\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4, \beta_5$, and β_6 = Regression coefficients associated with the independent variables;

ϵ = Error term.

This model makes it possible to simultaneously assess the influence of the six dimensions of the leader–employee relationship on workers' motivation. The interpretation is mainly based on the coefficient of determination R^2 , which indicates the proportion of the variation in motivation explained by the dimensions of the leader–employee relationship. The β coefficients make it possible to assess the direction and magnitude of the influence of each dimension, while the p-value makes it possible to determine whether this influence is statistically significant.

The significance level is set at 5% ($p < 0.05$). Thus, a positive β coefficient associated with a p-value below 0.05 indicates that the dimension concerned has a positive and statistically significant influence on workers' motivation. Hypothesis H2 will therefore be supported when the quality of the leader–employee relationship, considered as a whole, has a positive and statistically significant influence on workers' motivation in the companies studied.

III. RESULTS

A. Main Characteristics of the Leader–Employee Relationship in Private Companies in the Boeny Region

The analysis of the results makes it possible to identify the main dimensions characterizing the relationship between leaders and employees in private companies in the Boeny Region. The dimensions studied are communication, trust, listening, support, recognition, and mutual respect. The workers' responses make it possible to assess the level of perception of each of these dimensions using a five-point scale. The results obtained are presented in the table below.

Table I: Level of Appreciation of the Main Characteristics of the Leader–Employee Relationship

Main characteristics	Mean	Standard deviation	Rank
Communication	4.12	0.61	1
Trust	4.05	0.66	2
Listening	3.98	0.69	3
Support	3.91	0.72	4
Recognition	3.87	0.70	5
Mutual respect	3.85	0.71	6
Overall mean	3.96	0.68	–

Source: Author, 2026

The results presented in Table I show that the six dimensions studied receive relatively high levels of appreciation, with an overall mean of 3.96 out of 5. Communication is the most highly rated dimension, with a mean of 4.12, followed by trust with 4.05. Listening ranks third with a mean of 3.98, while support and recognition obtain 3.91 and 3.87, respectively. Mutual respect has a mean of 3.85. These results indicate that the relationship between

leaders and employees is mainly based on communication, trust, and listening. They therefore provide an initial indication for assessing hypothesis H1, according to which the leader–employee relationship is characterized by these different dimensions.

B. Correlation Between the Main Dimensions of the Leader–Employee Relationship

In order to examine the relationships between the different dimensions of the leader–employee relationship, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted. The correlation coefficient ranges from -1 to +1. A positive value indicates that two variables move in the same direction. The closer the coefficient is to 1, the stronger the linear relationship between the two variables.

Table II: Correlation Matrix of the Main Dimensions of the Leader–Employee Relationship

Variables	Communication	Trust	Listening	Support	Recognition	Mutual respect
Communication	1.000	0.542**	0.516**	0.587**	0.481**	0.523**
Trust	0.542**	1.000	0.623**	0.552**	0.516**	0.601**
Listening	0.516**	0.623**	1.000	0.647**	0.574**	0.612**
Support	0.587**	0.552**	0.647**	1.000	0.681**	0.635**
Recognition	0.481**	0.516**	0.574**	0.681**	1.000	0.653**
Mutual respect	0.523**	0.601**	0.612**	0.635**	0.653**	1.000

Source: Author, 2026

The correlation matrix shows that the six dimensions studied have positive relationships with one another. The coefficients range from 0.481 to 0.681, indicating positive associations of moderate to relatively strong intensity. The highest relationship is observed between support and recognition, with a coefficient of 0.681, indicating that workers who perceive greater support from their leaders also tend to perceive greater recognition. Trust and listening also show a relatively strong relationship ($r = 0.623$), while listening and support have a coefficient of 0.647.

Communication presents positive correlations with trust ($r = 0.542$), listening ($r = 0.516$), support ($r = 0.587$), recognition ($r = 0.481$), and mutual respect ($r = 0.523$). These results show that the different dimensions of the leader–employee relationship are interconnected. Thus, a quality relationship appears to rely on several complementary components, particularly communication, trust, listening, support, recognition, and mutual respect. These results provide additional evidence supporting hypothesis H1.

IV. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Discussion

The results of this study show that the relationship between leaders and employees in private companies in the Boeny Region is mainly characterized by communication, trust, listening, support, recognition, and mutual respect. The overall mean obtained is 3.96 out of 5, indicating a relatively favorable level of appreciation of the quality of this relationship among the workers surveyed. Among the six

dimensions studied, communication ranks first with a mean of 4.12, followed by trust with 4.05 and listening with 3.98. Support, recognition, and mutual respect have means of 3.91, 3.87, and 3.85, respectively. These results are consistent with the relational approach to leadership, which emphasizes the quality of interactions between leaders and employees. According to Graen and Uhl-Bien, the quality of the relationship between leaders and their employees is based notably on trust, respect, and reciprocal exchanges [7]. The results obtained in private companies in the Boeny Region therefore show that the relational dimension constitutes an important element in professional interactions.

Communication appears to be the most highly appreciated dimension, with a mean of 4.12. This result indicates that workers generally perceive their interactions with their leaders as favorable. Clear communication makes it possible to provide the information necessary for carrying out tasks, clarify responsibilities, and facilitate understanding of the company's objectives. It also allows employees to communicate their difficulties and suggestions. This observation is consistent with the principles of Self-Determination Theory, according to which the social environment and interactions with others can contribute to the development of individuals' motivation. In the companies studied, the importance given to communication can therefore be explained by its role in coordinating work and maintaining direct relationships between leaders and employees [8].

Trust ranks second, with a mean of 4.05. This level of appreciation shows that trust is also an important component of the leader-employee relationship. A relationship based on trust can facilitate communication, cooperation, and task completion. When workers trust their managers, they may be more willing to share their concerns, seek assistance, and participate in company activities. This finding is consistent with the Leader-Member Exchange approach developed by Graen and Uhl-Bien, which considers trust and respect as elements that contribute to the development of higher-quality professional relationships. However, the level of trust also depends on management practices, the transparency of decisions, and the consistency of managers' behavior [9].

Listening has a mean of 3.98 and ranks third. This result shows that workers attach particular importance to leaders' ability to take their opinions, difficulties, and expectations into consideration. Listening enables managers to better understand the situations encountered by employees and provide appropriate responses. It may also encourage workers' participation in discussions related to their professional activities. This observation can be related to Maslow's theory of needs, particularly regarding social and esteem needs. Being listened to and taken into consideration may contribute to strengthening employees' sense of belonging and their perception of their value within the organization [10].

Support has a mean of 3.91. Although it ranks below communication, trust, and listening, this result remains relatively favorable. Leader support may take the form of assistance in performing tasks, professional advice, guidance when facing difficulties, and the manager's availability. These practices can facilitate employees' work and contribute to

their engagement in their activities. The results therefore show that the leader-employee relationship is not based solely on the transmission of instructions, but also on supporting workers. This dimension may be particularly important when employees encounter difficulties or need to adapt to new responsibilities.

Recognition has a mean of 3.87. Despite ranking fifth, this dimension also shows a relatively favorable level of appreciation. Recognition notably concerns the appreciation of employees' efforts, results, and contributions. According to Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1959), recognition is one of the factors that can promote job satisfaction and motivation. When an employee perceives that their efforts are recognized by their manager, they may be more likely to view their work as valued within the organization [11]. However, the level obtained in this study suggests that recognition could be further developed in private companies in the Boeny Region, particularly through the regular appreciation of employees' efforts and achievements.

Mutual respect has a mean of 3.85, representing the lowest level among the six dimensions studied. Despite this position, the mean remains relatively favorable. Mutual respect constitutes an important foundation of professional relationships because it concerns the way leaders and employees perceive and treat each other in the workplace. Respectful behavior can facilitate communication, reduce tensions, and promote cooperation. It can also contribute to creating a professional environment in which employees feel considered and treated fairly. In this context, the relatively high score obtained suggests that mutual respect is present in the companies studied, although it appears to be the dimension that could receive greater attention compared with the other dimensions.

The Pearson correlation analysis further shows that the different dimensions of the leader-employee relationship have positive relationships with one another. The coefficients range from 0.481 to 0.681, indicating positive associations of moderate to relatively strong intensity. The strongest relationship is observed between support and recognition ($r = 0.681$). This is followed by the relationship between recognition and mutual respect ($r = 0.653$) and that between listening and support ($r = 0.647$). These results show that the different dimensions of the leader-employee relationship do not operate independently. A leader who listens more attentively to employees may be better able to provide them with appropriate support. Similarly, the support provided to workers may be associated with greater recognition of their efforts. This interdependence confirms that the quality of the leader-employee relationship is based on several complementary dimensions.

The correlation results also show a positive relationship between communication and trust ($r = 0.542$) and between communication and support ($r = 0.587$). These relationships indicate that the quality of interactions may be associated with the development of other dimensions of the professional relationship. Regular and clear communication can facilitate mutual understanding between managers and workers and contribute to the development of a climate of trust. Similarly,

effective communication can enable leaders to identify employees' needs more easily and provide appropriate support. These findings therefore reinforce the idea that improvement in one relational dimension may be accompanied by improvement in other dimensions. The relationship between trust and mutual respect ($r = 0.601$) also indicates that these two dimensions are closely connected. A relationship characterized by mutual respect can facilitate the development of trust, while trust can, in turn, encourage respectful interactions between leaders and employees. Likewise, the correlation between listening and mutual respect ($r = 0.612$) suggests that employees who feel listened to may also perceive greater respect from their leaders. These relationships illustrate the interconnected nature of the different components of the leader–employee relationship.

Overall, the results provide support for Hypothesis H1, according to which the relationship between leaders and employees in private companies in the Boeny Region is mainly characterized by communication, trust, listening, support, recognition, and mutual respect. The overall mean of 3.96 out of 5, together with the positive correlations observed among the six dimensions, indicates that these components are perceived favorably by the workers surveyed. However, the differences between the means suggest that the dimensions are not perceived at exactly the same level. Communication and trust receive the highest scores, whereas recognition and mutual respect receive comparatively lower scores. This observation suggests that companies could pay particular attention to these latter dimensions in order to maintain and further develop the quality of professional relationships.

B. Recommendations

In light of the results obtained, private companies in the Boeny Region are encouraged to strengthen the quality of relationships between leaders and employees by paying particular attention to the six dimensions studied, namely communication, trust, listening, support, recognition, and mutual respect. Communication, which has the highest mean, should be maintained and further developed through regular exchanges between managers and workers, team meetings, and clear communication of information concerning objectives, responsibilities, and organizational changes. Managers could also create opportunities for employees to express their concerns, difficulties, and suggestions. This approach would help strengthen mutual understanding and facilitate work coordination. Furthermore, companies should pay particular attention to developing trust and listening in professional relationships. Leaders could adopt management practices based on transparency, consistency in decision-making, and respect for commitments made to employees. Individual interviews or periodic discussions could be organized to better understand workers' expectations and the difficulties they encounter. Listening should not be limited to receiving employees' concerns, but should also result in appropriate responses and, whenever possible, concrete actions. These practices could contribute to establishing more open and cooperative professional relationships. The companies should also strengthen support and recognition, particularly because the correlation between these two

dimensions is the strongest ($r = 0.681$). Leaders could provide more regular assistance to employees in carrying out their tasks, offer professional guidance, and provide appropriate support when difficulties arise. Recognition could be expressed through verbal appreciation, acknowledgment of individual or team achievements, constructive feedback, or other forms of appreciation suited to the organization's resources. Such practices could help employees perceive that their efforts and contributions are valued within the company.

Finally, particular attention could be given to mutual respect, which obtained the lowest mean among the six dimensions studied (3.85). Companies could promote respectful professional behavior through clear communication of expected standards, fair treatment of employees, consideration of individual differences, and constructive management of disagreements. Training sessions on interpersonal communication, conflict management, and leadership practices could also be organized for managers and team leaders. These measures would help maintain a professional environment based on respect, cooperation, and constructive interaction. More broadly, the companies could periodically assess the quality of leader–employee relationships through employee feedback surveys in order to identify areas requiring improvement and monitor changes over time. Regarding support, managers could strengthen the assistance provided to employees in carrying out their tasks. This support may take the form of advice, assistance in case of difficulties, experience sharing, training, or regular monitoring of work. Leaders should also ensure that their support is adapted to the needs of different employees, taking into account their responsibilities and levels of experience. Such a practice would facilitate task completion and create conditions conducive to workers' involvement in their professional activities.

Recognition also constitutes an area for improvement, given its mean of 3.87, which is lower than those of communication, trust, listening, and support. Companies could place greater emphasis on employees' efforts and achievements through encouragement, congratulations, additional responsibilities, or forms of recognition suited to the organization's resources and possibilities. Recognition criteria should be clearly defined and applied fairly in order to avoid perceptions of favoritism. Valuing individual and collective contributions could therefore promote greater worker involvement.

Mutual respect, which obtained the lowest mean among the six dimensions studied, at 3.85, also deserves particular attention. Managers should promote professional behaviors based on consideration, courtesy, fairness, and respect for individuals. Differences of opinion should be viewed as elements that can contribute to professional discussions rather than as systematic sources of conflict. Awareness-raising activities on professional behavior, disagreement management, and respectful communication could be organized to strengthen the quality of relationships within teams.

V. CONCLUSION

This study focused on the quality of the leader–employee relationship as a lever for human resource motivation in private companies in the Boeny Region, Madagascar. Its objective was to analyze the main dimensions of this relationship and their influence on workers' motivation. The results obtained from 200 employees show that the leader–employee relationship is mainly characterized by communication, trust, listening, support, recognition, and mutual respect, with an overall mean of 3.96 out of 5. Communication and trust have the highest levels of appreciation, whereas recognition and mutual respect are dimensions requiring greater attention. The correlation analyses also show positive relationships among the different dimensions studied. Furthermore, the regression analysis makes it possible to examine the influence of the quality of the leader–employee relationship on workers' motivation and to assess the contribution of the different relational dimensions. Overall, the results highlight the importance of daily interactions between leaders and employees in human resource motivation and emphasize the relevance, for private companies in the Boeny Region, of developing management practices based on communication, trust, listening, support, recognition, and mutual respect.

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